

# AUDITOR TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

The Seafood Inspection Program offers an auditor certification service for government and private personnel who desire an unbiased third party to train and evaluate the performance of persons who will be used to audit food safety and quality systems. Although the expertise of the agency is in seafood, the knowledge and experience provided is universal for all food systems and with the proper product experience can be easily applied to any process or system.

Following the standards of ISO 10011-1 to 10011-3 relating to audit function, management, and auditor certification, the certification service uses a three-phased approach to qualifying food quality auditors. The approach requires formal training, field experience, and a final evaluation. Each phase can be contracted for separately or together as a complete program. The typical time frame for completion of all phases is six months. Faster times can be expected if the audits are available for the field experience.

Phase One — Formal Training  
Formal training in the principles, tools,

and techniques of quality auditing is required before completing the rest of the program. There are three ways to gain this knowledge.

## Classroom

Expert personnel will travel to your location and provide a formal classroom course upon request. The two day course provides only the theories and methods in a classroom situation. The five day course adds time in a food production facility to give the class a vehicle to practice some of the techniques. A written test is provided to assist the student and instructors in assessing the areas in which the student needs more in-depth study or experience.

## Correspondence

The theory and methods training can also be taken through a correspondence program. The program is divided into five segments. The participant takes each segment in turn with a short test at the end of each segment. Tests are graded and guidance provided for any further exploration of the material as needed. The full course takes approximately 16 hours to complete.

## Testing

Persons who have been certified as having specific auditing knowledge, such as those with Certified Quality Auditor certification from the American Society for Quality, will be considered to have completed this phase.

## Phase Two — Experience

The ISO standards require that the auditor have experience in all phases of the audit after their formal training. If the Seafood Inspection Program were to provide this experience, the costs could be very high. Instead, we will evaluate the paperwork for each student's audit through the mail, providing guidance and evaluation as necessary.

In addition, if desired, persons can be sent to participate in audits with members of the Seafood Inspection Program to gain first hand experience.

## Auditor Experience Requirements

To be considered an Auditor, the applicant must complete at least four (4) full systems audits to cover at least 20 audit days. Audit days include planning and report writing time.

Lead Auditor Experience  
Requirements

To be considered a Lead Auditor, applicants must complete at least three **additional** audits as the lead for the audit team.

Phase Three – Evaluation and Testing  
The evaluation visit consists of one of our lead auditors accompanying each auditor on an audit and performing a formal assessment as to their abilities. If the applicant wishes to have lead auditor status, they must be performing as the lead for the full audit. This process takes approximately three days per person.

Final Testing

After all above portions are completed, the auditor applicant will be given a written, open-book test.

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[seafood.nmfs.gov](http://seafood.nmfs.gov)

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U.S. Department of Commerce  
Seafood Inspection Program